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ASPARAGUS

Its Care & Cultivation

T. R. PENDER
Williston, S. C.



PRICE LIST OF
DEPENDABLE CROWNS
(ROOTS) AND SEED
“Mary Washington” Rust
Resistant
The Ideal Asparagus

INTRODUCTORY

As a result of the many inquiries I receive as to the varieties I recommend, where the seed and roots can be procured, and what methods of culture my experience has taught me I have written this little booklet.

While I am prepared to answer these questions promptly, cheerfully, and fully, yet I feel considerable time will be saved to my customers and their interest better served by furnishing them in booklet form such information and suggestions as my experience has taught will be of the most value to them in the cultivation and production of asparagus. That is the purpose of this little booklet which I have gotten up as briefly and concisely as possible, according to the volume of questions contained in the hundreds of inquiries I receive.

The varieties of seed and roots (crowns) which I am offering for sale are the best varieties available, both in the Rust Resistant and the older varieties.

T. R. PENDER,
Williston, S. C.

Reference:

Bank of Williston.
Farmers and Merchants Bank.
Bradstreet.

ASPARAGUS—ITS CARE AND CULTIVATION.

Asparagus is one of the most delicious, the surest, and earliest product of the truck farmer or gardener. Its position among other vegetables is unique, and when once planted lasts almost a life time. It may be prepared for use in a great variety of ways and may be canned or dried so as to be available at any time of the year, and yet in the majority of gardens it is almost unknown. The principal reason for this neglect is based on the erroneous idea that asparagus culture requires unusual skill, expense and hard work. While this was true, in a measure, under old time rules, modern methods have simplified every detail connected with the cultivation of asparagus as to make it not necessarily more expensive and laborious than any other garden or truck crop.

The original habitat of the edible asparagus is not positively known, as it is found naturalized throughout Europe as well as in nearly all parts of the civilized world. How long the plant was used as a vegetable or as a medicine is likewise unknown, but that it was known and highly prized by the Romans at least two centuries before the Christian era is historically recorded.

It is historically recorded that the Romans and English, as well as others, used the asparagus roots, sprouts and seeds as medicine, and it was as highly esteemed as ginseng is by the Chinese of this day.

All who have eaten asparagus agree that it is very easily digested and is very healthful. Some who have kidney trouble claim to have been benefitted by eating asparagus.

In presenting this little pamphlet, it is my desire to bring to you the facts about asparagus just as they are. There is no truer saying than that there are two sides to every question, and it is my intention to tell just what will make a success and failure with asparagus.

The writer has had 20 years' experience with asparagus and has learned some things about this valuable crop. However, I realize there is more for me to learn. Possibly you have heard that asparagus is a very valuable crop, and all that you have to do is to get some roots or crowns, as they are sometimes called, plant them out and in about three years go to your asparagus field every spring and get rich cutting asparagus. This is not the case, however; but I will say, without fear of contradiction, that asparagus is a better money crop than cotton before boll weevil times, and is just as staple, if not more so, than cotton before boll weevil times, and there is no more prospect of overproduction of asparagus than there is of cotton.

On this and the following pages it is my desire to give you my way of cultivating and harvesting this valuable crop; also of others who have made much success with this crop.

I want to ask you to take enough of your valuable time to read this

and the following pages and see what others are doing with asparagus, and if your land is suitable and you take the same care you can make the same success. If there is anything at any time that you do not understand, write me and I will be glad to answer any question to the best of my ability, free of any charge whatever.

I have been growing asparagus roots for sale for the past seven years, and although I have increased my output each year, I have never been able to supply the demand.

After seeing my crowns and the price of same, you will be surprised to know that crowns of this quality can be sold at such a low price. This is made possible by the quantity of crowns I grow. They are grown on a cash basis and sold that way, and are grown from the best seeds obtainable.

My crowns are grown on land that has practically no grass seed left on the land the year before. It is almost impossible to grow asparagus crowns on grassy lands, as the grass grows about three times as fast as the asparagus does and all grass has to be taken out by hand and is a very tedious and expensive proposition. The seed are planted by especially made planters in order to get the seed spaced properly, so as to produce all uniform crowns. All my crowns are extra large one-year old, which is far better than two-year old. This question has long been settled by all authorities that a good, strong one-year old crown is the best. I grow

asparagus myself and I do not send out any crowns that are not large enough or that I would not plant myself.

If you are interested in asparagus I will be glad to have you come and look at my crowns and see just what you are getting, if you do not live too far away. Visitors are always welcome except Sundays and holidays. If after reading these few pages you have suitable land for asparagus and want to plant a few acres to this valuable crop, I will be glad to book your order on a deposit of 20 per cent., balance to be paid before shipment is made or balance will be shipped C. O. D. No crowns shipped C. O. D. unless 20 per cent. of the amount of the order has been paid in advance. Remittances should be made by check, express or post-office money orders.

Let me say here that I want to thank my many old customers for the most liberal patronage they have given me in the past, and I want to assure them, as well as all new customers, that all orders entrusted to me will have my prompt and personal attention. All orders filled in the same rotation as they are received. All crowns are shipped by express collect, unless otherwise specified. However, on large orders it is all right to ship by freight if crowns will arrive within a week or ten days. It is best not to keep them out longer than this. My responsibility ceases when crowns are delivered to transportation company in good

order. Express receipt or bill of lading mailed for each shipment. Should there be shortage, in any way, all claims for same must be made in one week after crowns are received.

Honesty and square dealing first, last and all the time, is my policy, so don't hesitate in sending me your orders, as you can be assured of a square deal. Sample of crowns sent on request. See bank reference elsewhere. Space will not permit me to give testimonials from satisfied customers.

Yours very truly,

T. R. PENDER.

Williston, S. C.

Suitable Land for Asparagus.

Asparagus grows well in a variety of soils, much more so than any other crop. However, a rich sandy loam is much better; soil is well drained and that does not form a hard crust after each rain, a soil that is quick to grow off any other crop and that warms up quickly in the spring. Never plant asparagus in stiff clay land or in a stiff bottom. Some may tell you that poor sandy land is the best for asparagus. This is true in a sense if you have no rich sandy land. You have to make the poor land rich before you make any money on asparagus, and for this reason it is best to select a few acres of the best rich sandy, well drained land that you have, as asparagus will be your best money crop if you give

it the proper care. Never plant asparagus in land that has stumps, as you don't want to be plowing around stumps for twenty years or longer and losing that much land. A land that has a little slope and on which the rows can be run East and West is best, because rows run in this direction get the benefit of all the sun, whereas if they were run in the other direction part of the bed would be in the shade in the morning, part in the evening. A land with a South slope and one that is protected from the cold spring winds will make the asparagus or "grass," as it is often called, come up earlier. This is one reason why stable manure is so valuable in growing grass; it seems to have a certain amount of warmth about it.

Planting Asparagus.

This should be done any time in the dormant season—December, January and February—while January seems to be the best month. The last of February the roots or "crowns," as they are sometimes called, begin to sprout, and after they have sprouted it is impossible to get a good stand, and for this reason I would advise all parties contemplating planting asparagus to place their orders as early as possible and to get them planted out in January; as you know, many people wait until the last minute, then everybody wants their crowns at one time. All orders are

filled in rotation as they are received, so place your orders early and get your crowns out before they begin to sprout. I have seen them sprout with a few warm days in February.

The Distance Apart to Plant Asparagus.

This is a big question and is somewhat up to the man that plants grass and the kind of grass he wants to grow. In the North it is planted generally about three by four feet and much deeper than we do in the South, as earliness does not seem to interest them as much as it does growers in the South. Here some growers tell you to plant it twenty inches by six feet, while others will say four by eight feet. I have in mind a neighbor who has possibly made more money to the acre than any other man in the State. He plants his grass four by eight feet. This is all right after your grass gets six or eight years old, as by this time the crowns will have grown until they are almost touching. The first six or eight years would have made more grass had it been planted closer; on the other hand, a bed of asparagus planted in this way will last much longer than one planted closer. As I said in the beginning, this is a big question and is up to the individual to decide how far apart to plant. I plant mine about two by six and a half feet. This will give you more grass earlier, but the

beds will not last for as many years. With rows six feet wide and planted twenty inches apart, 4,000 crowns are required to the acre; two and a half feet by six and a half, 3,000 are required to the acre, and four by eight feet 1,500 will plant an acre. This man I spoke of has been getting over three hundred dollars per acre gross sales from six acres for a number of years. His expenses per acre will not be over \$50.00, this including labor, crates and fertilizer, leaving a net profit of \$250.00 per acre, year after year. This man grows extra large grass, puts up a neat package and ships every crate to one commission man. Consequently the trade calls for his grass just as you would call for Octagon soap.

Land should be well broken and harrowed, if there is any vegetable matter on the land. Lay off rows perfectly straight and regular the distance apart you have decided to plant; lay off rows with a small shovel plow, then take a two horse turn plow and run in the edge of the shovel plow furrow, making a round to each row, leaving a balk about six inches wide. Then scatter about five two-horse loads of stable manure in this furrow; also about a thousand pounds of high grade fertilizer per acre. Then take a middle-buster and plow out this balk and you have a furrow ready to plant the crowns. The bottom of this furrow now should be about eight inches below a level of the land. Some people say to plant it just as deep as you can get it.

This is a mistake. It can be planted 12 or 15 inches deep, but this will not do; you never saw anything grow down in the yellow dirt and asparagus is not an exception. In preparing this furrow try and get as much top soil worked in around the crowns as possible; also get the fertilizer where it will come in contact with the roots as soon as it comes up. Now drop the crowns in the furrow the distance you have decided on. It is best to place the crowns in the furrow with the top up. You can tell the top by the pointed part that will come up and from where the old top was broken off. Some growers do not go to this trouble to put the top of every crown up, but this is the best plan.

After crowns are planted, cover them about two inches deep with foot or by taking a board or large sweep and making a round to the row. Run the board or plow up on the edge of the furrow and let just enough dirt roll down on the crowns to cover them well. This method is much better than covering with something like a set of distributor plows. By covering with a board in this way you have a wide bottom furrow, and after the grass is up high enough it can be plowed very easily with a small bull-tongue plow. As the grass grows, gradually work the dirt in around it until the land is level. Cultivate and keep clean until the last of June or the first of July, then sow in peas and let the peas stay on the land; or it is all right to plant some

other crop between your grass for the first two or three years. This is the way most growers do, although if you have plenty of land sow it in peas.

The next year work out the middles with a turn plow, throwing the dirt to the middle of the row, leaving a place about ten inches wide on top of the bed or crowns; take a scraper plow and run very shallow, cutting off this ridge. As the asparagus begins to come up and weeds begin to appear, gradually work dirt back around it. The same amount of fertilizer and compost will do for the second year. Always remember that if you have more manure, that your asparagus patch can use it and will pay you well for it. It is not best to cut any grass the first year; however, some growers cut a crate or so the first year.

The second year cultivate same as before. Put half of what fertilizer you have in the two last turn plow furrows or on top of the bed, then with a turn plow make a bed about ten inches high. The second year you should cut enough grass to pay for labor and fertilizer used that year, but do not cut from your grass very long. Stop cutting about two weeks before you would old grass. If it is cut too long the first year it will injure the stand. As soon as the cutting is stopped, plow down the beds and cultivate clean for about two months, then sow in peas and don't forget to let them stay on the land. Peas seem to be the best crop

to plant in asparagus; the pea leaves seem to make the land loose and free from hard crusting over. Velvet beans is a good soil builder, but they seem to smother out the grass, especially young fields.]

Harvesting.

From the third year to the fifteenth you should get a handsome profit from asparagus beds properly cared for, and possibly longer if beds have been properly fertilized. Some time in January, and not later than February 1st, the middles of the rows should be thoroughly broken, throwing all the soil to the middle of the rows; leave a space about fifteen inches wide on top of the crowns or bed and cut this off with a disk harrow or any kind of plow, being careful not to plow deep enough to injure the crown. Put all the compost and half of the fertilizer you expect to use at this time; put the compost on the sides of the bed or on top, then cover a few inches deep and let it stay this way until you see a few sprouts of grass coming up, then with a turn plow or riding disk cultivator, put a bed on crowns for cutting white grass. This bed should be about twelve inches high, while for green grass about eight inches will do.

As the grass comes up it is cut with a knife, which looks something like a wood chisel about an inch and a half wide. There are many aspara-

gus knives on the market, but one can be made by any blacksmith out of an old buggy spring, making it about sixteen inches long and sharpening the thin end and putting a handle on the other end. This knife can be made very cheap and is the best kind to use, as the wide part of the knife helps the operator to prize the sprouts loose from the crown. The grass is then placed in baskets and hauled in wheel-barrows or wagons to the packing house. The grass is then taken from the baskets and graded. The smaller grade, or choice, is anything under one-half inch in diameter at the largest place; the next largest grade, or fancy, is anything under three-fourths of an inch in diameter at the largest place, and the next grade, or Colossal, is from three-fourths of an inch and larger. The grass is then placed in bunches and tied with tiegrass or tape, preferably with tape as Tiegrass is apt to cut the tender sprigs, and is cut off about eight inches long. All short sprouts and crooked and ill-shaped should be packed separately or canned. If green grass is cut it should show four or five inches green.

All that part of the grass which is above the ground is green, and if green grass is wanted, let it stay on the bed until it is this high, but if white grass is wanted, it should be cut just as soon as it can be seen. A large majority of the grass is cut green, as it is very tender and has somewhat a different flavor to white grass. However, some few markets

want the large white grass and pay as much for it as the green.

The green grass loses about one-fourth its size in growing from white to green grass; in other words, four crates of white will not make over three crates of green grass, if that much. Possibly 80 per cent. of the grass is cut green, as most markets do not want white grass at all.

After the grass is graded, packed and cut off eight inches long, it should be placed in crates holding twelve bunches. Some kind of swamp moss should be placed in the bottom of the crates about an inch and a half deep. A moss which holds water well should be used. I use and recommend a water-proof paper in the bottom of the crate and is placed in the crate with all the edges up. This forms a pan like and will hold all the water that would otherwise go to waste from the wet moss until the asparagus uses it up. Asparagus contains a large per cent. of water, and if placed in a dry, windy place, will soon wilt and go to nothing. I have seen it loose nearly one-fourth its original size in six hours time when placed in a dry, windy place. So if wet moss is good, why not put water-proof paper under the moss to hold the water? This paper can be had at possibly two cents per crate, and I believe often times will add twenty-five to fifty cents to the sale of each crate. This paper can be gotten very reasonably from the Angier Corporation, Farmingham, Mass. Never let grass stay in a

windy place, and if the grass is not ready to be placed in the crates as soon as it is packed, it should be placed in troughs with water about one inch deep.

Varieties and Disease.

The only enemy which this plant has is the asparagus beetle and rust. The asparagus beetle has never bothered asparagus in the South and has done very little in other sections, while the rust has done great injury to this crop in the North. The asparagus rust is somewhat like scales on peach trees, and attacks the plant in the summer and fall and kills it down to the ground, which causes another growth to come up from the crown, and when the rust is very severe it will keep killing the top until the roots become weak and die. The rust has never done any material damage to this crop in the South, although rust can be found in most fields, just a hill here and there. What the outcome of this disease cannot be said. A number of formulas for spraying for rust have been tried, but nothing practical has yet been found. Asparagus rust is more severe some years than others.

In 1908 this matter of asparagus rust was taken up by the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C. With Mr. J. B. Norton at the head of this department endeavored to find a rust resistant variety of asparagus. Asparagus seed of every

known name and description from this country and Europe were obtained, and planted under severe rust conditions, and among the thousands and thousands of plants that were grown all took the rust. However, selections were made of the most rust resistant plants and seed were saved from these. In the lot of seeding in 1910 showed one male plant A-7-83 from a lot unknown to show wonderful plant transmitting vigor and rust resistance. A female plant, B-32-39 from Reading Giant procured from England, when crossed with this plant, showed the best progeny lot of all the hundreds of combinations, from this pair came our first named Martha Washington. From these plants came all of the celebrated Washington rust resistant varieties, as the Martha Washington, and Pedigreed Washington.

This work was kept up by Mr. Norton with the Bureau of Plant Industry, until about seven years ago, when the Coker Seed Co., at Hartsville, S. C., secured the services of Mr. Norton, together with a quantity of the seed which he had been breeding. Since that time Mr. Norton has continued breeding this wonderful rust resistant variety. The Pedigreed Mary Washington asparagus crowns I am offering for sale this year were grown from seed from the Coker Pedigreed Seed Co., at Hartsville, S. C.

During the many years which this Washington asparagus has been bred for rust resisting qualities it has al-

so been bred for early, large, straight shoots with tight buds when shoots are twelve inches long. This is a great advantage, especially in growing green asparagus. With many of the other varieties, the shoots will sprangle out when six inches or more above the ground. This asparagus has been bred for as near a perfect asparagus as possible.

Kind of Fertilizer to Use.

This is another big question, and depends somewhat on the nature of the land. Different lands require different fertilizers. However, most any high grade standard fertilizer will bring good results. It is a question of quantity rather than any specific kind. Some growers use 8-4-4 and some a truckers' special, something like 7-5-5 and have gotten excellent results. Compost, cotton seed and any vegetation that can be left on the land is good. Some growers use a liberal amount of kainit, while others use nitrate of soda. Write the U. S. Department of Agriculture for Bulletin No. 829 on asparagus; also your State colleges, telling them the nature of your land. Try different mixtures and you will soon find the one that suits your land best. Remember that the quantity is important.

If you have terrace land, by all means plant asparagus on your terraces, even if it is in clay land, and it will bring you in a handsome profit as well as make your terraces

more substantial, and if you can not do this, by all means plant a few hundred crowns in your garden. About one hundred crowns will make enough grass for a small family and two hundred for a large one.

Growing asparagus is a specialty in a way. However, not so much as growing peaches and other crops, as there is very little disease to fight. Any good farmer can grow corn and cotton can grow asparagus. The main thing is the man, the land and amount of fertilizer.

Canning.

This is very easily done and is not so expensive as canning some other crops. The grass is taken from the field, graded if desired, the tips are cut four or six inches long, depending on the length of the can. It is then washed and placed in wire baskets, with the tips up, then carried to a pan of boiling water and boiled for ten minutes; then removed to a can of cold water, so it can be handled, then it is placed in open top cans, all the tips up, then filled with a salty brine. It is then sealed and cooked for about 20 minutes at 240 degrees. The only expensive machinery about canning grass is the sealing machine and the boiler where it is cooked.

Remember that the "latch string" hangs on the outside. Come and see what we are doing with this valuable crop and what kind of crowns you

are getting. The price of my crowns is as low as they can be successfully grown. If you pay more than these prices you are paying too much; if you pay less you are getting inferior crowns. If you expect to plant asparagus another year, send me your order with 20 per cent. deposit. This will book your order and you can rest assured of getting a square deal and getting good crowns when you want them.

**The Williston Way Print,
Williston, S. C.**

“Mary Washington”

The Best High Producing, Tender Green Asparagus for Market and Home Use.

There is no variety of asparagus as good as the Washington and no strain as good as the “Mary.”

Mary Washington “The Ideal Asparagus” is earlier, has larger stalks, more prolific, possesses highest rust resistance and will net more money per acre under the same conditions than any other variety of asparagus.

The seed are larger, and will produce a larger crown under same conditions than any other asparagus.

“Mary Washington” has long been recognized, by Mr. J. B. Norton, the originator and who is considered as the leading asparagus expert in America to be the best variety of asparagus known.

The “Mary Washington” is so much better that I have discontinued growing any other crowns except the Mary Washington as will be noted from the price list. I want my customers to have the best, and will ask that any who are in doubt as to the excellent qualities of this asparagus to come and see, I will be glad to show them the different fields and varieties and the difference in the several varieties. Remember the latch string hangs on the out side, don’t knock, come in.

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